

THE
M O D E S
O F
Presbyterian Church-Worship,
VINDICATED:
IN A
L E T T E R
T O T H E
B L A C K S M I T H.

By THOMAS VANCE. *K*

THE SECOND EDITION.

*Prove all Things : hold fast that which is good——Speak every
Man Truth with his Neighbour, for we are Members one of
another.*

NEW TESTAMENT.

D U B L I N :

Printed by WILLIAM SLEATER at Pope's-Head,
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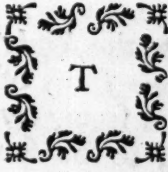
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DUBLIN:

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ADVERTISEMENT.

HOUGH the Pamphlet, to which the following LETTER is an ANSWER, is pretended to have been originally designed only for the Church of *Scotland*, uncommon Pains have been taken to spread it through this Kingdom*, and especially in the Northern Parts of it among the *Presbyterians* there. The whole of it is written with so virulent a Spirit, and with so little Regard to Truth and Candor, that it is hard to believe, what is confidently reported, that it has received great Countenance from Persons, of distinguished Eminence and Authority, in the Church. But whether this be so or not, it continues to be industriously propagated, and great Use has been, and still is, made of it, for exposing the *Presbyterians* and their Worship. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if after having long borne these Insults with Patience, *One of that Denomination*, thinks himself obliged to take some Notice of a Performance, which, because it has hitherto been neglected, is pretended to be *unanswerable*. If any Thing is said in a Way of necessary Defence, which may be disagreeable to some Persons, it must be laid to their Charge who, unprovoked, have endeavoured to insult and expose those, who were willing to be at Peace with them.

° *Ireland.*

A
L E T T E R, &c.

S I R,

THOUGH I do not belong to the *Right Reverend* and *Right Honourable* Class of Men, you have addressed, who seem, by their utter Negligence of your Epistle, to be far above your Instructions or Ridicule; Yet as I am a Lover of Truth, and a Friend to Liberty; and the Press being as free to me as to any *Hammer Man* in the *British Dominions*, I shall, without further Ceremony, set about answering your Letter, so far as it deserves any serious Notice; preserving that Spirit of Meekness and of Decency which will not, I hope, be without its Use, in freeing a very respectable Part of the Community from that Dust of your Manufactory, Mr. *Blacksmith*, with which you have so liberally besmeared them.

The whole of your Charge against the Church of *Scotland* and its Adherents, may be summed up in four Particulars.

The first, relates to the publick Reading of the Scriptures.

The second, to Psalmody.

The third, to the Indecencies that attend the Administration of the Lord's Supper.

And the fourth, to Extemporary Prayer.

Upon each of these Heads, you have collected what you think exceptionable, inconvenient, and defective; and I hope with Impartiality to follow you in your Remarks, and to obviate your Charge.

You first * submit it to the serious Consideration of the Gentlemen of the Church of *Scotland*,

* *Blacksmith's Letter*, pages, 5th and 6th, Dub. Edit.

“ Whether

A N S W E R, &c.

“ Whether a larger Portion of the Scriptures should
 “ not be read, every Lord’s Day, in their public
 Assemblies,” and you are, or pretend to be, “ at
 “ a Loss whether to ascribe the Negligence of this
 “ essential Part of their Service to the Pride of the
 “ Clergy, or the Perverseness of the People,” &c.

I answer, that according to the Constitution of that Church, it is provided, that the *Canonical* Books of the Scriptures should be read over in Order; But such as minister in holy Things, are not tied down to a certain Portion of them, in Exclusion to the Rest, nor are they obliged to substitute *Apocryphal* instead of *Canonical* Writings in their publick Service; but it is left to their Prudence and free Arbitration what, and how much, of the inspired Books shall be read. Upon this Account the Custom varies almost in every Church; some read whole *Chapters* without any Comment; others make a few pertinent Remarks, according as Passages are more or less difficult; Others who are at more Pains proceed in a regular Course of explaining a certain Number of Verses, ’till in this Manner they go through all the sacred Writings. I am inclinable to pay this Compliment, Sir, to your Knowledge of Antiquity, as to believe you are not ignorant, that this Method of Instruction took its Rise very early in the *Christian Church*;* and where it hath been observed since the *Reformation*, as pretty generally it is among that People, and their Adherents, who are censured so severely by you, it must be allowed that it hath tended exceedingly to the use of edifying; and it is quite natural

* We have Reason to believe, our Lord himself used it as is pretty plain from (Luke iv. 17.) And in his Discourse with the two Disciples going to *Emmaus*, Luke xxiv. 27. And if we may judge of the manner of teaching used by some of the Fathers, [See the Works of *Origen*, *Basil* and *Augustin*] by those Discourses that remain, it was chiefly expounding the Scriptures.

that it should have this Effect, as it gives the Audience a very clear View of what is read to them, and impresseth sacred Truths more deeply upon the Mind.

And to the Honour of the Laity of the Church of *Scotland*, I shall mention it, as *Paul* commended the *Bereans*; they are more universally acquainted with the Scriptures, than the Laity of any other Church whatsoever. If, therefore from the Methods used among them, the happiest Consequences have been and are produced; and if they are countenanced likewise by the best Antiquity, what avails your Ridicule on the Pride of the Clergy and Perverseness of the People?

As to your Manner of reasoning, Sir, against Pulpit Expositions, that by them “the Understandings of the Laity are put too much in the Power of the Clergy, and the Simple and Ignorant are exposed to be seduced by the party Principles and whimsical Opinions of the Preacher,” &c. I shall only observe that it holds equally good against sermonizing of every Kind, and all Comments upon the Scriptures whatsoever.

Your next Charge against the Church of *Scotland* respects its Psalmody*. “As to Praise, you say, they seem to study to give this Part of their Worship as much the Air of Rusticity and Contempt of God as possible—Nothing to engage or elevate the Heart—The Words obsolete and low—the Versification mean and barbarous—the Music harsh and ill performed—And the Posture most indecent.”

As to the first Part of this severe Accusation, wherein you assume what belongs only to the Searcher of Hearts, and characterize this solemn Service as a direct Contempt of God, between you and Him whose Province is usurped, let it rest. I hope you will be brought to think more seriously

* Blacksmith's Letter, page 9. &c.

BLACKSMITH'S LETTER. 7

and justly of this important Matter, and to acknowledge that where there is not a Word uttered, or a Sound heard, there yet may be Melody harmonious and acceptable.

The Words, some of them, may be obsolete and low*, but those you condemn, are under no Necessity of using these. Without the least Censure, others may be, and by some are substituted in the Room of them; and if we may judge of the Elevation of the Heart, from the united Voices of the Performers, the Church of *Scotland* and its Adherents must secure our charitable Approbation. As Psalmody makes up a very considerable Part of the *Christian's* Devotions, there are very few, of that Denomination, who think it *beneath them to sing the Praises of the Almighty*; and, excepting in some remote country Congregations, the Music is far from being ill performed.

As to the Posture; where such a Number join in singing, it would perhaps tend more to Discord than to Harmony if they should all perform standing. When the Posture is therefore of no Importance what adds to the Harmony must be principally attended to. But if any of the *Presbyterian* Communion in *Scotland*, or any *Protestant Dissenter* in *England* or *Ireland*, or wherever this Persuasion is embraced, choose standing or even kneeling in this Service, he is at his Liberty, and may, unreproved, use the manner most agreeable to himself. I shall only add, that in the few Passages where this Service is mentioned in the *New Testament*, there is as much Countenance given to the Sitting

* The Version this Writer refers to as commonly made use of in *Scotland*, has not more obsolete Words, nor indeed so many as that of *Sternhold* and *Hopkins*, which, for a long Time was generally made Use of in the Churches both of *England*, and *Ireland*, and still is used in many Places; Nor is there any better Version as yet appointed by the publick Authority to be universally used. And if Persons are at Liberty to use other Versions in the one Church, they are so in the Other.

as to an erect or any other Posture: Thus while our blessed Saviour *sat* with his Disciples administering and instituting the solemn Sacrament of the Supper, before they separated, we are told*, and we have Reason to believe it was before they rose from the Table, (for there is no mention made of their changing their Posture) they *sung an Hymn* or *Psalms*.

But your principal Outcry §, Mr. *Blacksmith*, is against “the Indecencies and Follies that attend the Administration of our Lord’s Supper. “You defy *Italy* with all its Superstition to produce a Scene better fitted to raise Pity and Regret in a religious, humane and understanding Heart; or to afford an ampler Field for Ridicule to the Careless and Profane, than what they call a Field-preaching upon one of those Occasions.”—And, in which of these Classes you have ranked yourself, it requires no great Sagacity to discover. For here it is that your Ridicule puts on its keenest Edge; and your Wit and Invention equally vie with each other.

I will not say that the Charge you bring in every Part is injurious and unjust: But this may confidently be affirmed, that, as it is general and indiscriminate, and as far as it strikes at the Constitution of the Church of *Scotland*, it must come under this Censure.

For the Benefit of those who are in a great Measure Strangers to the Usages of this Church, respecting the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, it is necessary to observe, that ever since the *Reformation* Communicants in it have been very numerous. This, which is neither a Fault nor an Indecency, necessarily occasions a Labour extraordinary, to which no one Man’s Abilities can be supposed equal. The neighbouring Ministers therefore

* Mat. xxvi. 30. and Mark xiv. 26.

§ *Blacksmith’s* Letter, p. 11, &c.

BLACKSMITH's LETTER. 9

whose Assistance is required, sometimes draw after them a Number from their respective Churches, who may choose to put themselves to a little Trouble rather than to enjoy at Home a silent Sabbath, or perhaps be obliged to attend Ministrations from which they could not expect such Profit. But it is worthy of our Notice, that if any of the sober Part from the neighbouring Parishes attend with a Design to join in the Participation of the Memorials of our Saviour's Passion, they cannot be admitted, unless properly attested from the Ministers or Officers of the Churches to which they belong. This is not indecent, but desirably regular: If they are Spectators only and do not communicate, this can be no Detriment, but an Incitement rather, to the Devotion of those that are more solemnly engaged.

And it may be justly said, that the whole Work, as far as it regards the regular Members, is conducted with as much Decency and as little Share of Confusion, as could well be expected where such Numbers have a Right to be admitted, and cannot, merely to avoid a little Inconveniency, be excluded.

But it must be allowed, that while some from the best and purest Motives are led to such Ordinances, others of the meaner Class, and who seldom act from any worthy Principle, assemble with them likewise; many of these are hardened Wretches, who instead of being affected with the solemn Gravity around them, seem to rejoice in such Opportunities of shewing themselves *ten Times more* the Servants of the Devil.

If then, Sir, there have been Indecencies observable in any particular Churches, among those you would censure, they were, without Doubt, principally occasioned by the Indiscretions of unworthy Spectators who croud to such Solemnities, and who cannot be restrained from doing so, unless,

Mr.

Mr. *Blacksmith*, you who seem to have the Good of that Church *greatly* at Heart, would please to solicit for Letters Patents to make Bolts and Fetters to bind at Home the irregular Rabble. But while a mixed Multitude is permitted, where many convene of various Denominations, who neither fear God, nor honour the Legislative Power, it is not to be expected but that there should be Instances of Folly and Impiety to cast a melancholly Shade over such Solemnities.

This however I dare affirm, that of all the reformed Churches, there are none more careful, with respect to their regular Members, than that which your Satyr would bring a Reproach on. No Persons can be admitted to its Privileges, without giving sufficient Evidence both of their Knowledge as to the Principles of *Christianity*, and of their moral Character: If the least Stain hath invaded this latter, they are obliged to give the fellow Members of their Community full Satisfaction, either of their Innocence or of their Repentance, before they are permitted to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And in Truth, such Care is taken to preserve a pure Church, by continual Inspection and Enquiry, as deserves the Applause and Imitation of all who lay Claim to the Character of *reformed**. Some may have fallen away from their religious Profession, and in certain Places the strictness of Discipline may be relaxed; but among all Denominations of *Christians* there is nothing new or singular in this; and would it not be very wrong to bring an *Odium* upon a Body of Men for the Indiscretions of Individuals? Just as the Ca-

* If I were disposed, like this Writer, to cast indiscriminate Reflections on large Churches and Bodies of Men, how easy would it be to recriminate, and to produce the Testimony of a Church, on many Accounts very respectable, which yet acknowledges and laments the want of a *Godly Discipline*! But the Church of *Scotland* stands in no need of being commended at the Expence of any Other.

BLACKSMITH'S LETTER. 11

viller at our most noble *British* Constitution would deserve to be despised, whose Malevolence would shade its Lustre, because Miscreants have attempted to disturb its Tranquility.

But, Mr. *Blacksmith*, if all the Wicked of the Earth should join together, and be aided with all that your vilifying Genius could suggest, to render a sacred Solemnity ridiculous, this must not, and with the solid Reasoners and just Thinkers among our Readers, will not, bring any Reproach upon the sober and serious Part, who form the Body, as in Truth they are by far the Majority, of *Presbyterians* or Protestant *Dissenters*. Those who have in the least incurred your Censure will, I hope, be taught by you, (for we may take a Hint even from an Enemy) for the future to enter into such prudential Schemes as may secure them from every Thing indecent or irregular. And it is the peculiar Happiness of the Church of *Scotland* and its Adherents, that this can be effected without the Interposition of *Synod*, *Assembly*, or *Convocation*.

It is difficult, Sir, for the Friends of Piety to comprehend what you mean by "our idle Days, "in *Scotland*,"* and your Discourse equally idle about them, and Calculations upon them. But if by these are meant Days of Solemn Humiliation or Thanksgiving, your Invectives are not only unjust but impious. All the serious part of your Readers will allow very readily, that these kind of Appointments are not over frequent in *Scotland* or among Protestant *Dissenters*; nor could they be less frequent without injuring the Cause of true Religion. *Christianity* requires that a Man should examine himself before he eat of that Bread, or drink of that Cup; but if no previous Opportunity be allowed for this Purpose how shall it be performed? You have shewed by your Arithmetical Capacity,

* *Blacksmith's Letter*, pages 14, 15, &c.

what an immense Sum these Days, few as they are, must cost *Scotland* through the Year ||; but with as much Propriety you might have proceeded in your Calculation, and have struck at once at the Root of all Piety by reasoning in this Manner; “ Every
 “ Man whose Regards to Religion and its Exercises are sincere, and who wishes that his Soul
 “ may prosper, employs, we shall only say, one
 “ half Hour every Day in the Service of his Maker,
 “ in Prayer or Meditation; this, in the annual
 “ Revolution, to each Individual who thus employs himself, amounts to no less than seven
 “ Days, fourteen Hours, and an half; considered
 “ in a political Light. How hurtful therefore must
 “ private Piety be? We shall suppose that of the
 “ Millions, who are Subjects of *Great Britain*,
 “ only ten Thousand, one with another, do devote so much Time every Day to sacred Purposes; this will amount to Seventy-six Thousand
 “ and Forty-one Days, sixteen Hours; and supposing each of them could earn at the Rate of
 “ Six pence a Day, this will cost the Nation at
 “ least one Thousand nine Hundred and one
 “ Pounds and Six-pence, Sterling a Year; an immense Sum, you will say, for the Service of
 “ God? and *what Profit is there, if we bow the
 “ Knee before him?*” The Reasoning, Sir, is quite parallel; the Interests of God and Religion are equally concerned in both Cases, only in this Latter the Impiety is more apparent.

As for the Order and Oratory so much ridiculed I shall only observe, that they have hitherto been the Subjects of Admiration not of Contempt; and that while the *greatest* have reaped the most confi-

|| The *Blacksmith* did not consider, that if there was any Thing in these *Invectives*, they would bear much harder upon the Churches of *England* and *Ireland*, than on that of *Scotland*, since the Number of Days prescribed to be religiously observed are vastly more numerous in the former than in the latter.

derable

BLACKSMITH'S LETTER. 13

derable Advantages, *the meanest have not gone empty away*. Persons of almost every Persuasion can bear Testimony to this. An eminent Prelate,* the most eminent of his Time, confessed himself so struck with the Solemnity and Decency of such Administrations, that he desired Communion, and was admitted by the celebrated Doctor *Owens*.

The next and last Labour † of your Ridicule is pointed at publick Prayer as performed in the Church of *Scotland*. "The Purity and Peace of which Church, *you alledge*, would be greatly promoted by the Composition and Establishment of some devout Liturgy, or Form of Prayer for publick Worship." And in Favour of these stated Forms you roundly assert, that "the Professors of all Religions under the Sun, have used this Manner of Worship, *Greeks and Romans*, the *Magi* and *Mahometans*, *Jews* and *Christians* have all agreed in this Practice. Particularly you affirm very confidently "that the *Christian* Church universally used it till the fifteenth Century §: and you alledge, "that if the universal Consent and Opinion of Mankind is a conclusive Argument, when applied to the first and greatest Article of Religion, the Existence of God, it must be so too with respect to the best and fittest Way of Worshiping him."

Before I enter into the Merits of this Argument, I must beg to be heard a little, as to my own private Opinion of Prayer, and its Requisites. If we understand the Nature of Prayer, Disputes about the Manner of offering up our Addresses, will be the more easily adjusted.

The Nature of this solemn Duty, I apprehend, may be expressed in few Words. It is a lifting up
of

* Archbishop *Ussher*.

† Blacksmith's Letter, pages 20, 21.

§ The Author of the *Blacksmith's* Letter, in this, and several other Instances, has shewed little Regard to the Rules of
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of the Mind towards God, the Fountain of all Good, with humble Requests for such Things as we want or stand in need of, and are agreeable to the Will of God, who, by all that profess themselves *Christians*, is to be addressed in the Name of the Lord Jesus, with a general or particular Confession of Sins, and thankful Acknowledgments for the continual and merciful Supplies of his Providence and Grace; shewing the Sense of our Minds either in the Language of the Heart, or in the Expression of this Language by proper Words.

This, I think, is a just Description of Prayer; and if we apply the Debates about the Manner of Worship to any Part of it, I think they must appear very frivolous. Who dare say that stated Forms are so absolutely and essentially necessary to the due Performance of this Duty, as that without them there can be no Acceptance? And on the other Hand, would it be less Presumption to exclude from the favourable Regards of the Deity all stated Forms of Devotion? Upon this Account we should be very cautious of condemning those of either Party, who differ from us in this Matter; for it must be granted that though we may disagree in the Manner of offering up our Addresses, yet the Spirit of Devotion may not be wanting in which ever way we choose.

Decorum in Writing. For though he does the *Blacksmiths* in Scotland the Honour to suppose them to have more Learning than the *Blacksmiths* of other Nations, yet I think it is too much to suppose him, as he does, well acquainted with the Customs and Modes of Worship, of the antient *Greeks* and *Romans*, and of the *Magi* and *Mahometans*, of the *Christian Church* in all Ages, and of the Professors of all Religions under the Sun. This certainly requires a more universal Reading and Knowledge than a *Selden* or a *Grotius* could boast of. And to introduce a *Blacksmith* pronouncing so confidently concerning all Nations and Religions, is completely ridiculous; unless it be intended to insinuate that this *Blacksmith* has an uncommon Share of that Confidence which is generally an Attendant on Ignorance.

BLACKSMITH'S LETTER. 15

The Experiences of many valuable and sincere *Christians* on both Sides of the Question, prove the Truth of this; while they evidently shew the Rashness and Folly of the blind Censurer. What are Forms or Modes of Worship, when compared with the Graces of Faith, Love, Humility, Sincerity, Contrition, Resignation, and those ho'y Desires, and devout Affections, which are the Life and Soul of Prayer? As for those, therefore, who join with you, Mr. *Blacksmith*, in speaking disrespectfully of the Manner used by the Church of *Scotland*, and it's Adherents, calling it Cant, Jargon, blasphemous Effusions, *Presbyterian* Inspiration, and the like, let all who would desire to act as *Christians* pity and pray for you, but let them beware of imitating a Rudeness, so inconsistent with all the Rules of Religion and Charity, as well as good Manners.

I shall now enter upon this disagreeable Argument, but it shall be in the Spirit of Meekness, and so as not, designedly, to give Offence to any who, in their Worship make use of precomposed Forms; and as what I write is intended to be of general Service to all who can think or judge of this Subject, my Remarks shall be brief, and plain as possible.

Your first Argument as already laid down, is taken from the universal Consent and Practice of Mankind, which, as you alledge, "if it be fitly applied to the Proof of the first and greatest Article of Religion, the Existence of God, must be equally conclusive, with respect to the best, and fittest Way of worshipping him." I answer, that though the universal Consent of Nations, even the most barbarous, is a strong presumptive Evidence, in Favour of this Proposition, that there is a God, yet their idolatrous or superstitious Manner of worshipping Him, can never be brought in as a proper Model for our Services, who are, in the Dispensation of the Gospel of his Son, taught to *worship him in Spirit and in Truth*. In this Matter, therefore, the Practices of the *Greeks* and *Romans*,
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the *Magi* and *Mahometans*, cannot be of the least Advantage to the Arguments for stated Forms.

But you alledge * that “ God himself prescribed this Way of Worship to the *Jews*, that our Saviour honoured and sanctified it by his Presence and Practice, and authorized it by his Command.”

If these Things are so, those who pray without stated Forms are wrong indeed; but they must be made appear before we yield up our Liberty in the free way of Worship. With respect to the *Jews*, it would help speedily to determine the Debate, if the *Books* or *Chapters* of the *Old Testament* were pointed out, that contained the *Jewish* or *Hebrew* Liturgy. But though *Josephus*, their eminent Historian, hath given us an Account of that which was composed by *Ezra*, who was the first of the Order of the *Scribes*, and though the learned and laborious Doctor *Lightfoot*, hath happily retrieved one for us out of the *Jewish Rabbins*; yet as I do not find them in my *Bible*, nor countenanced by the sure Word of Prophecy, I must, as to my own Opinion, be greatly influenced by the Declaration of him, who particularly addressing the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, who were more than ordinary zealous for the Traditions of the Fathers, said unto them, *In vain do ye worship me, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.*

It is granted that in some particular Cases, and under certain Circumstances, Petitions and Acknowledgments to this or the other Purpose, or perhaps a Form of Blessing were prescribed, which extended to Individuals in these Circumstances; but it cannot in the least affect our Argument, unless an universal invariable Form, such as was to suit Persons of every Age, and of every State, and such as was used by all the great and good Men under the *Old Testament* Dispensation, in their

* Letter p. 21.

BLACKSMITH's LETTER. 17

publick Worship can be pointed out; the Abettors of Liturgies do nothing to the Purpose, unless something like this be produced.

We need only consult the History of the *Old Testament* Worthies to conclude, that they all *walked by Faith*, and served God in *their own Way*. As to our first Parents, they prayed it is certain, but it would be a ridiculous Fancy to say, that it was by Form.

Lowly they bow'd adoring, and began
Their Orisons, each Morning duly paid
In various Stile, for neither various Stile
Nor holy Rapture wanted they to praise
Their Maker, in fit Strains pronounc'd or sung
Unmeditated.*

By Faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent Sacrifice than Cain, God testifying of his Gifts. Enoch walked with God, and had this Testimony that he pleased him; in his Days, and probably influenced by his Example, Men began to call upon the Name of the Lord; or to be called by the Name of the Lord; to be distinguished as Men of Piety.

Noah preserving his Integrity, and the Worship of God in its Purity, when the old World was condemned, found Grace in the Eyes of the Lord.

Abraham looking for a City, which bath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God, obtained the Character of the Friend of God, and Father of the Faithful. Wherever he pitched his Tent, there he built an Altar and called on the Name of the Lord.

Isaac, in the Fields, poured forth his ardent Wishes; while the Servant of his Father is no less importunate at the Side of a Well.

Jacob, like a Prince, wrestled with God, and prevailed.

But to suppose, that these Patriarchs, or any of them, worshipped God by Form, or wrestled with him in the Darkness of the Night, and till the

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Dawning

Dawning of the Morning, out of a precomposed Liturgy, would be an Affront to common Sense. And thus we see from the earliest History of God's Church, how groundless that Assertion is, "that the present *extempore* Way of Worship used by *Presbyters* and others, is contrary to the Practice and Opinion of all Mankind, in all Ages*," and how little, Sir, we are to depend upon your Candor and Ingenuity, who can assert such Things.

If we continue our Enquiries, and consider the Character and Practices of *Melchizedec*, *Job*, *Moses*, *Josbua*, *David*, *Daniel*, and of all who, in fervent Prayer, have stood before God, we shall find them preserving the same Method of Address, pouring forth their Hearts in free Prayer, such as the Spirit of God, and their various Circumstances dictated. We do not find *Josbua* for Example, making use of the Words of *Moses*, though their Situation was in many Respects parallel; and tho' we might reasonably expect, that this great Follower of so great a Master, if it had been most agreeable to the divine Will, would have done so. Nor do we find *David* fettered by any Form in his Devotions; nor *Daniel* and the Prophets confined to the devotional Exercises of *David*.

Moses is often represented to us as a powerful Intercessor for the People of *Israel*; and one particular Instance is mentioned, wherein his Hands were stretched forth in earnest Prayer, upheld by *Aaron* and *Hur*, through a bloody Day, till the going down of the Sun. We have likewise the Prophet *Elijah*, speedily deciding the Controversy between him and the Priests of *Baal*, by *extempore* Prayer. We have him restoring the Widow's Son of *Zarephath* to Life in the same Manner. A like Instance is recorded of *Elisha* his eminent Successor.

We have the most noble and generous Interposition of *David* for his People, when the destroying

ing Angel was making such alarming and dreadful Devastations.

We have the Record of *Hezekiah's* Success against the formidable *Assyrian* Invasion, by the same Means; and of his Deliverance from a private Affliction, when he turned his Face to the Wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and he had this comfortable and speedy Answer, *I have heard thy Prayer, I have seen thy Tears, behold I will heal thee.*

We have an Instance no less striking in *Manasseh*, who *bumbled himself greatly* in his Affliction, and *the Lord was entreated of him.* The same may be observed of *Jonah* and the Mariners, they neither had nor used a Form; which, in that Prophet's particular Situation, would be absurd to think of.

After the Establishment of the *Temple* Worship, it cannot be said, any more than of the Period preceding, that free Prayer was restrained: We have many Instances to the contrary; and the very Prayer of *Solomon* at the Dedication of it, throws so much Light upon this Argument, that it is worthy of our strictest Notice. Such a Variety of Cases, are put, wherein it is proper for Men to offer up their free and unprescribed Addresses that all, who duly consider it, must be satisfied in this Matter. *If any Man, says he, trespass against his Neighbour, then hear thou in Heaven, and do, and judge thy Servants, condemning the Wicked to bring his Way upon his Head, and justifying the Righteous, to give him according to his Righteousness. When thy People Israel be smitten down before the Enemy, and confess thy Name and pray—then hear thou in Heaven, and forgive the Sin of thy People Israel.—When Heaven is shut up and there is no Rain, if they pray towards this Place,—then hear thou in Heaven, and forgive the Sin of thy Servants.—If there be in the Land Famine; if there be Pestilence, Blasting, Mildew, Locust; or if there be Caterpillar; if their Enemy besiege them in the Land of their Ci-*

ties; whatsoever Plague, whatsoever Sickness, there be; what Prayer and Supplication soever be made by any Man, or by all thy People Israel, which shall know every Man the Plague of his own Heart, and spread forth his Hands towards this House; then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling Place, and forgive and do, and give to every Man according to his Ways, whose Heart thou knowest.

How generous and unlimited is this solemn Dedication! Not precluding any from the publick Services of the *Temple*, who know the Plague of their own Hearts, or who spread forth their Hands thither. Many do we find making use of this Privilege, and reaping the Advantage of it. The *Temple* was in truth, what our Saviour calls it, *an House of Prayer*, as well as a Place of Sacrifice; and whatever other Oblations were offered, these were always accompanied either with the private Addresses to God, of the Party offering, or of the Priests for them, as their particular Circumstances required.

This, Sir, is the History of Prayer from the Accounts we have of it in the *Old Testament*; what more authentick Records of early Time, you may have discovered, I cannot tell. Some such it is to be supposed, you must have discovered, to bear you out in that Assertion, "that the present extraordinary way of Worship, is contrary to the Practice and Opinion of all Mankind, in all Ages, and of all Religions." But whatever your Reasons are for maintaining this strange Proposition, I will venture to affirm that they are not scriptural. Neither are they countenanced by profane Writers of the best Repute.

Of the Pagan Devotions, whether *Greeks* or *Barbarians*, *Homer* is the most antient and authentick Witness, his Heroes are often introduced praying; but their Addresses are such as their present Circumstances suggested, and he never gives the least

Hint

BLACKSMITH'S LETTER. 21

Hint of their using any Form ; on the contrary he introduceth *Phœnix* remonstrating to *Achilles*,

Και γαρ τε ληται εἰσι Διὸς κεραι μεγάλοιο.

ΙΑΙΑΔ 1. 1. 498.

Prayers are the Daughters of Almighty Jove.

Upon which Madame *Dacier* comments thus,
“ For ’tis God inspires Prayers, and teaches Men
“ to pray.”

What the mystical Rites of the *Magi* were, I will not indeed say ; nor will I at present enquire into the Modes of *Mahometan* Worship ; but if we are to be influenced by the Practice of those who have composed the Church of God in all Ages ; and if, in our Enquiry into this Matter, we pay any Deference to the Accounts which we have in the Volumes of Inspiration, we must believe that good Men have always enjoyed the Liberty of unfettered Devotion.

The *Old Testament* hath witnessed already to this Truth ; and can it be thought, that this Part of Scripture, which is so very minute in observing the smallest Matters relating to the *Tabernacle*, and every Fringe or Plate in the Priest's Vestments, would have omitted the Form of Words to be used in the daily Service, if such had been prescribed ? If we proceed to search the Records of the *New*, we shall find neither Precept nor Example for the Use of stated invariable Forms in the Service of God ; never indeed were they introduced into the *Christian Church*, ’till the Ages, Mr. *Blacksmith*, began to be of your Complexion*, and Ignorance, Superstition and *Darkness* that was truly felt, covered almost the Face of the whole Earth. You have laid me under the disagreeable Necessity of proving this.

B 3

“ Our

* The Epistles and Gospels were instituted by Pope *Damasus*, Anno. 384, vid. *Platin. & Pol. Virgil*. The Form of Service commonly called the Mass, with many Ceremonies, were added

“ Our Saviour,” you say,* “ honoured this
 “ Worship, with his Presence, for the Worship
 “ of the Synagogues was by a Form of Prayer.”
 And was it then the Design of our Saviour by his
 his Presence in those Places, to recommend either
 the Matter or the Manner of the Synagogue Wor-
 ship? If you say the Manner only; where have
 you learned this? For I do not find in my *Testa-*
ment, the least Hint to countenance such an Ima-
 gination. That our Saviour frequently took the
 Opportunity of such Assemblies, sharply to re-
 prove the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, for their Inventions
 and Impositions in the Worship of God; and like-
 wise to instruct them in the true and spiritual
 Meaning of the Law of *Moses*; the Sense of which,
 by their corrupt Glosses, they had dreadfully per-
 verted, is readily granted. But can any Heart
 conceive that he meant to sanctify what he so sharp-
 ly reproves, or to establish a Form of Worship that
 was upon the point of expiring? His own Practice
 teacheth us the contrary of this: The Sea-side,
 Mountains,

added by Pope *Gregory*, and by his Minister *Austin* in the *Eng-*
lish Church, in the seventh Century.

In the *English* Liturgy at present, the Collects are generally
 taken out of the *Popish Breviary*, and many of the Prayers in
 the standing Offices, out of the *Missal* and *Ritual*.

K. *Edward* ingenuously acknowledgeth this in his Decla-
 ration to the *Devonshire* Rebels (a) “ Though” says he, it
 “ seemeth to you a *new* Service, yet indeed it is no other but
 “ the *old*; the self-same Words in *English*, that were in *Latin*;
 “ For nothing is altered, but to speak with Knowledge, that
 “ which was spoken with Ignorance, only a few Things taken
 “ out, so *fond*, that it had been a shame to have heard them
 “ in *English*.”

The first Reformers, by thus endeavouring to gain over the
Papists, it must be acknowledged, acted a prudent Part; but
 to persist in not throwing out what is still exceptionable to many
 of their own worthy Members, and particularly offensive to
Dissenters, I cannot help thinking, seems to shew a greater Re-
 gard to the *Popish* than to the *Reformed* Interest.

(a) Holinshed's Hist. vol. iii. p. 1005.

Mountains, and desert Places, Night as well as Day, were Witnesses to the Decency, Spirituality and Fervour of his Devotions; and by this we are instructed, that in every Place, he that worshippeth God *in Spirit and in Truth, shall be accepted of Him, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.* It is almost unnecessary to prove it, the Thing is so very plain, that now under the Purity of that Religion which our blessed Saviour hath established, all outward Ceremonies, Modes and Circumstances of Worship are commanded to give Place to the Sanctity of the Heart, and the inward Devotion of Spirit. That *the Time is now come, when neither at Jerusalem, nor at this or the other Mount, with Faces towards the Temple, but in every Place the true Worshipers of the Father, are to worship him, not turning over Leaves, but lifting up holy Hands, without Wrath or Doubting.*

Did the humble *Publican*, though in the *Temple*, read his Prayers? Or where had the proud *Pharisee* his vaunting Form?

Besides, Sir, since you have so ingeniously used our Saviour's Attendance on Synagogue Worship, as an Argument for adopting their Manner, why not their Matter also? Or will you pretend to say that our Saviour in his Attendance upon the *Jewish* Service paid more Deference to the Form than to the Matter? I am persuaded, Sir, that though it be the natural Consequence of your Reasoning, you did not mean to involve yourself in this shocking *Dilemma*.

In Support of what you recommend, you further affirm, that our Saviour sanctified Forms of Prayer by his Practice: "For in his Agony in the Garden, he rose up, awakened and rebuked the Disciples, returned to the same Place, and repeated the same Form of Words three Times over."

If the *Evangelists* had said that our Saviour exactly

actly repeated the same Expressions three Times over, nothing could be concluded from thence for stated invariable Forms of Prayer in publick Worship. Our Lord's Circumstances were then of a peculiar Nature, and the Petitions he offered turned upon one Point: and he that would argue, that we ought always to repeat the same Words in Prayer, because *Jesus Christ* in these peculiar Circumstances did so, would shew himself a pitiable Reasoner; but the Truth is, the Fact itself is misrepresented, and the Evangelists themselves witness against you.

The Words of *St. Matthew* are these, [see *Mat. xvi. 36, &c.*] *Then cometh Jesus with them, unto a Place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the Disciples sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.—And he went a little further, and fell on his Face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

This, Sir, is what you are pleased to call the Form, and to assert that our Saviour repeated it three Times over; but in the *Evangelist's* Account there is a remarkable Variation in our Lord's second Prayer. For he tells us, that after modestly chiding his Disciples, and at the same Time apologizing for their Weakness, *he went away again the second Time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this Cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy Will be done.*

In the Account of the Evangelist *St. Mark*, (a) there is still a greater Variation. (b) And *St. Luke* tells us, that *being in Agony, he prayed more earnestly*; which we may justly suppose the Evangelist relates of his third Prayer, for he says that after returning to, and exhorting his Disciples, *while he yet spake, a Multitude, and Judas with them, came to apprehend him.* (c)

This

(a) *Mark, xiv. 36.*

(b) *Luke. xxii. 44.*

(c) But perhaps because it is said, in *St. Matthew* and *St. Mark*

BLACKSMITH's LETTER. 25

This then, Sir, makes nothing in your Favour: And all that can be gathered from it is, that our Saviour being under a particular Pressure, from the full Prospect of his approaching Sufferings, returned thrice to the same Subject—not barely *saying the same Words*—but as his Mind dwelt upon this Matter, so his Devotion run upon it, and his Words were to one Effect.

If, however, we consider, the Season of the Night, the Admonition of our Lord to his Disciples to *watch and pray*, or his own Example—we must conclude, from this Passage, that free Prayer is not without the strongest Arguments to enforce it.

As another Recommendation of stated Forms you assert that our Saviour “before he expired upon the Cross, offered up his Devotions in the “Words of the Twenty-second *Psalms*.”

I answer, that, therefore, any Man in Imitation of *Christ's* Example, may freely choose out and apply to his own Case, or the Case of others, such scriptural Expressions as shall be most suitable to them. For our Lord, upon this mournful Occasion, does not make Use of the Prayers he had formerly offered, nor that Form or Pattern which he

Mark according to our Translation, that *he prayed saying the same Words*. (Matt. xxvi. 44. Mark xiv. 39) the Meaning must be that he used precisely the same Expressions. A Man of Learning, as you, Mr. *Blacksmith*, take upon you to be, ought to know however, that the Passage, in the original, in both Evangelists runs thus, *τον αυτον λογον ειπων*. *λογος* is not expressed in the plural Number, and therefore is improperly rendered *Words*, as it might have been, if *ρηματα* had been made Use of. It is well known that *λογος* admits of various Significations, and is variously rendered by our Translators. In *Luke* xx. 3. they translate it *Thing*. In *Acts* viii. 21. as also *Acts* xv. 6. and *Acts* xix. 28. it is translated *Matter*. In *Romans* ix. 28. it is rendered *Work*. And in *Acts* x. 29. it is rendered *Intent*, and might be rendered *Purpose*. That Passage therefore in St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*, might have been properly rendered, *speaking the same Thing or Matter*. Or if the original had it that he spake the same *ρηματα* though this also is used to

signify

he had given to his Disciples; but finding his Case to be then very singular, he movingly expostulates, not in the Language of the whole *Psalms*, but in part of the Words of the first Verse. *My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?* I shall be judged by the unprejudiced, if the Abbetors of free Prayer could wish for a stronger Plea in their Favour.

Your next Assertion is, that the Son of God hath "authorized stated Forms of Prayer by his Command." The Place indeed is not mentioned where this Command is given, and I must own I do not recollect it; but as our Lord's comprehensive Prayer is immediately referred to, it is probable, that it relates to the Manner in which one of the *Evangelists* introduceth it.

This Prayer is indeed the best, the most full and perfect that ever was composed in the World; and if ever any Form was intended to have been invariably used in the Christian Church, this was it: I will not presume to issue the Controversy, whether the Blessed Author of it intended that we should, in our Devotions, Word for Word, abide by this *Formula*. I shall only offer a few Things relating to this Question, leaving it to the Judgment of the Reader to determine as he pleaseth.

That it was only designed as a divine Rule or Model of Prayer, not as a precise Form, seems to appear from this Consideration:

That our Blessed Saviour himself, as far as we can find, never so much as once used it, upon all those various Occasions which he afterwards had of Praying, to the Father; though it is very observable, and I have often remarked it with Pleasure, that the Petitions he offered up, various as they were,

signify Things as well as Words, it must necessarily be understood thus, that he spake Words to the same Purpose; except we make the *Evangelists* contradict themselves; since, as hath been already shewed, the Words as recorded by them are not precisely the same Expressions, though to the same Sense.

were, are all of them reducible, to one or other of those, which are contained in his most excellent Summary.

And as our Saviour did not, so we have no Account that ever his Apostles joined in the Use of this Prayer in their Assemblies, or that they so much as once used it, though for themselves and the Church of God, the Petitions they offered, were likewise conformable to this divine Pattern, which, in his excellent Sermon on the Mount, our Lord had shewed them.

Besides, had it been the Intention of our Saviour, to bind his Followers to the Use of these Words invariably, is it not probable that the *Evangelists* would have recorded them without the least Variation? But this is not the Case. In the fourth Petition, St. *Matthew* hath it thus (a) *give us this Day, our daily Bread*; St. *Luke*, (b) *give us Day by Day our daily Bread*. The fifth Petition is likewise differently worded. With the one *Evangelist* it stands thus, (c) *and forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debtors*: The other hath it thus, (d) *and forgive our Sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us*. The *English* Liturgy varies from both thus, *forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us*. And which is yet more considerable, the whole Conclusion is omitted by St. *Luke*, which the other *Evangelist* hath in these Words (e) *for thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory for ever, Amen*.

From which Comparison it is a reasonable Presumption, that our blessed Lord in this Prayer, intended

(a) Mat. vi. 11. ΤΟΝ ΑΡΤΟΝ ΗΜΩΝ ΤΟΝ ΕΠΙΟΥΣΙΟΝ ΔΟΣ ΕΜΙΝ ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ.

(b) Luke xi. 3.—ΔΙΔΟΥ ΗΜΙΝ ΤΑ ΚΑΘ' ΗΜΕΡΑΝ.

(c) Mat. vi. 12. ΚΑΙ ΑΦΕΣ ΕΜΙΝ ΤΑ ΟΦΕΙΛΗΜΑΤΑ ΕΜΩΝ, ΩΣ ΚΑΙ ΗΜΕΙΣ ΑΦΙΕΜΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΟΦΙΛΕΤΑΙΣ ΕΜΩΝ.

(d) Luke xi. 4. ΚΑΙ ΑΦΕΣ ΕΜΙΝ ΤΑΣ ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑΣ ΗΜΩΝ, ΚΑΙ ΓΑΡ ΑΥΤΟΙ ΑΦΙΕΜΕΝ ΠΑΝΤΙ ΟΦΙΛΟΝΤΙ ΗΜΙΝ.

(e) Mat. vi. 13.

tended no more than to give his Disciples, and all faithful *Christians* to the End of the World, a divine Directory—not an invariable Form of Devotion. Thus *Augustine* (a) expressly declares, that “*Christ*” “in the Delivery of these Petitions, did not teach” “his Disciples how they should speak, or what” “words they should use in Prayer; but to whom” “they were to pray, and what Things they were” “to pray for, when engaged in the Exercise of secret or mental Prayer.” And therefore while in one of the *Evangelists* it is said, *when ye pray say, &c.* The other hath it, *after this Manner pray ye.* If we take this as an express Command of our Lord whenever we pray to use this Form, it will prove that we ought never to use any other Expressions in our Addresses to God than those in this Prayer. Nor should we ask a Blessing to our Victuals, or give Thanks without it. This would destroy the Use of all other Forms whatsoever.

Besides, there are some Men of Learning, who hold that this Prayer of our Lord was not designed for the perpetual Use of the Church, but only for a temporary Form: To this Purpose they observe, that the three first Petitions, *hallowed be thy Name, thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done, &c.* seem to be calculated chiefly for the Dawn of the Christian Church; for that Period, when according to the Doctrine of *Christ* and his Forerunner, and to the Expectation of the pious *Jews*, *the Kingdom of God was at Hand.* They observe farther, that in the Petition for forgiveness of Sins, there is not the least Mention made of the Sacrifice, the Death, or Blood

(a) *Aug. de Magistro* Cap. 1.

One of the most judicious Criticks is of the Mind, that these Clauses, *which art in Heaven, and thy Will be done, as in Heaven so in Earth, and deliver us from Evil,* were not originally in *St. Luke's* Gospel, but crept into it out of *St. Matthew's.* And he gives this Reason for it, that the first Clause, *which art in Heaven,* is neither extant in the old *Latin,* nor in some of the *Greek Copies.* And he alledges the same of the second Clause. *Grot.*

Blood of *Christ*, in Virtue whereof we must now sue for Pardon ; whereas our Saviour after his Resurrection and Ascension, is every where proposed, as our High Priest, Mediator, Intercessor and Advocate, of which there is no Notice taken in this Form. And therefore they suppose that upon this Account a considerable Time after it's Delivery, our Lord tells his Disciples, *hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name, ask and ye shall receive*. They observe likewise that the *Doxologies* mentioned in Scripture after our Saviour's Ascension, lead us directly and expressly to ascribe our Praises to God by *Christ*, or in his Name, of which there is not the least Hint in our Lord's Prayer. These are the Observations of Men who hold it as a Form, suited chiefly to the State of the Disciples, while under our Saviour's personal Ministry. I submit them to the Ingenuity of the Reader.

As to my own Sentiments I concur with the learned *Grotius* * that neither *Christ*, nor his Apostles as far as we can learn, have commanded the very Words of this Prayer to be used, though this may be done with Profit ; but the original Design seems to be, that the Matter of our Prayers, should be deduced from thence.

I shall now, Sir, pursue the History of Prayer through the subsequent Periods of the Church, that it may appear how groundless, how inconsistent with all Truth your Assertion is, “ that the
“ present extemporary Way of Worship, is contrary to the Practice and Opinion of all Mankind in all Ages, &c. until it was introduced
“ amidst the Ferment and Confusion of the fifteenth Century.”

In all the Accounts we have of the ardent Devotions of the Apostles and pious Martyrs, whether

* *Non enim præcipit Christus Verba recitari, quod nec legimus Apostolos fecisse, quanquam id fieri cum Fructu potest, sed Materiam Præcum hinc promere.* Vid. *Grot. Comment. in Matt. vi. 9.*

for themselves or their Fellow-sufferers, none of them are recorded in the same Words, nor any of them in the express Phrases of our Lord's Prayer, or of the Prayers used by such as were before them in the same Circumstances.

After our Lord's Ascension it was the constant and laudable Practice of the Church, to assemble for the solemn Acts of Devotion, and to eat and to drink in Remembrance of his Passion. But where do we find the *Christian* Liturgy? In what *Book* or *Chapter* of the *New Testament*? The Substance of many devotional Exercises are recorded, but not a Syllable to countenance the Opinion that they prayed by a prescribed Form. The most eminent Names of the three first *Centuries* might here be mentioned as a perfect Illustration of this Truth. These primitive Professors of the *Christian* Faith, under the most cruel Tortures, ceased not the highest Acts of Devotion and Charity, offering up their several Prayers for the suffering Church, and even for their Tormentors and Enemies, but never servilely followed, nor presumptuously prescribed to others, in an Exercise wherein their own Hearts, and the particular Circumstances of their separate Communities, were principally concerned.

As for the Apostles of our Lord, though they have perfected the Sum of *Christian* Doctrine, and though they had undoubtedly the best Right to prescribe a stated invariable Form of Worship, which at all Times would suit the Church and the Individuals of it, yet they have left this Matter free and undetermined. And as for the Liturgies which bear the Names of St. *James* and St. *Mark*, and some other of the *Evangelists*, it is very well known, and acknowledged by the greatest Friends of established Forms, that they are false and spurious.*

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* See *Echard's Ecclesiastical History*.

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BLACKSMITH'S LETTER. 31

If it be said that the Apostles were inspired, and therefore did not stand in need of any Form, I answer, that their Qualifications by Inspiration, rendered them the fitter to prescribe and impose a Liturgy for the future Use of the *Christian Church*, if they had thought this necessary.

But industrious as they were, to promote the Cause of *Christianity*, we do not find that ever they attempted to enslave Men's Minds in any Yoke of Bondage. We have each of them in their own Words offering up their own Requests, and none of them tied down to any Form; as might be instanced in the Prayer that was put up by the Church after the Disciples *Peter* and *John* had been imprisoned, examined, threatened and dismissed by the *Jewish Sanhedrim*. After this we have likewise an Account of *Stephen's* Persecution, of his most rational Defence, pious and devout Behaviour, and patient Martyrdom; but his Petitions being conceived in other Words, than those of the above mentioned Prayer, and such as his peculiar Circumstances, and truly *Christian* Spirit dictated, we may be fully assured that he had no Notion of any preconceived Form; and if he had thought that even the recital of our Lord's Prayer was absolutely necessary, he would not have omitted it, and gone to Death offering up only his own Petitions. The same may be observed of the devout Addresses of the Apostles *Peter* and *Paul*, suited to the State of the several Churches they wrote to, and conceived in their own Language.†

Ecclesiastical

and Dignitary of the Church of *England*, mentioning these scandalous Forgeries, as if they were of the most undoubted Authority. See the *Preface to the Christian Liturgy*, pages, 5, 6, 7.

† Two very plain Evidences of this Conduct in the first followers of our Lord we have in Record. The one is, when they were about to choose an Apostle to succeed in the Room of *Judas*, when they prayed and said, *Thou, Lord, which knowest the Hearts*

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Ecclesiastical History furnisheth us with like Instances in the Prayers of *James*, surnamed *the just*, of *St. Ignatius* after he was condemned and before his Martyrdom ; but particularly of *Polycarp*, whose Prayer is recorded more at large, and of which we may remark, as of all the rest, that as he paid no Deference to the Forms of others that went before him to reap the same heavenly Crown, so those that immediately succeeded him in the Roll of Martyrs, did not think fit to abide by his, though a better perhaps, upon a like Occasion, could not be composed.

Justin the Martyr, fully shews the Manner of the *Christian Service* in his Time, when he tells us, † “ that he who instructed the People, prayed according to his Ability.” To this Witness of the second Century, succeeds *Tertullian* in the Third ; “ We look up to Heaven ‡ says he, with our Hands stretched forth, as not being ashamed to “ make our Prayers (*sine monitorē quia de pectore*) “ without a Monitor or Promptor, because from “ the Heart.” *Clemens Alexandrinus* concludes his last Book of *Pedagogy*, with a Prayer which neither begins nor ends with the Lord’s Prayer.

Origen, in his Book on Prayer, tells us that it would be impossible for him, without the Assistance of Heaven to explain how we ought to pray, what we ought to say when we pray, and what are the most proper Times of Prayer. He had not the Advantage, Sir, of a *Rubric* or *Liturgy*.

He distinguishes four Kinds of Prayer ; the first (*δευσις*,) *Supplication*, which is to ask any Good of which we stand in need. The second (*προσευχη*,) implies

Hearts of all Men, shew whether of the two thou hast chosen : the other at the choosing of the Deacons.

In the first of these Instances we have the very Prayer recorded which the Apostles used, and which is not the Lord’s Prayer, but one particularly suited to the Occasion. And the same may reasonably be supposed concerning the second, though the Prayer they used is not distinctly mentioned.

† *Just. Martyr. Apol. 2 page 98. οτι δευσις αυτω.*

‡ *Tertul. Apol. 9. Ch. 30. Ep. 121.*

BLACKSMITH'S LETTER. 33

implies a Request that is made in any Danger, with assurance of obtaining what we desire. The third, (*εὐχαριστία*,) is put by a Person who has great Confidence that he shall obtain what he asks, he being much in God's Favour. The last, is giving of Thanks for the Benefits which we have received: And he gives Examples not from any Liturgy, but from the Holy Scriptures, of each of these Kinds of Prayer.

The Emperor *Constantine*, on his Coins and Medals, is represented in a praying Posture, not as reading, but with Eyes lift up to Heaven. §

Thus, Sir, I have traced the History of Prayer, from the earliest Account of Time, which we certainly have in the Records of the Bible; and I flatter myself that from the Days of *Adam*, 'till the Commencement of *Christianity*, and from that during the Apostolick and purest Ages of the *Christian Church*, it will appear that we have many Examples of free Prayer; but not one Instance of a Liturgy acknowledged as authentic, or warranted by divine Authority, can be produced. And I would hope, Sir, that were not your Countenance too deeply footed over, it would betray at this Discovery of your shameful Partiality, some Symptoms of modest Sensibility.

Indeed every honest Enquirer after Truth must be fully satisfied, that the method of addressing the Supreme Being, used by the Church of *Scotland* and its Adherents, had an earlier and surer Foundation than what you are pleased to ascribe it to, "the Ferment and Confusion of the fifteenth Century."

But pray, Sir, what was this Ferment and Confusion? Where was it? And how did it serve to in-

§ He that would see a full Answer to what has been alledged to shew that publick prescribed Liturgies were of early Antiquity in the *Christian Church*, may consult the learned Mr. *Clarkson's* Discourse concerning Liturgies: And Mr. *Robinson's* Review of Liturgies in Answer to Dr. *Bennet*.

roduce the present extemporary Way of Worship? This, Sir, is gratifying your remarkable Genius; for I am persuaded that the Historians of that Age will leave it solely to your own Invention, to make out proper Answers to these Questions. And, if we may judge from your past Labours, it is not to be doubted but you will yet convince the World, that the *Blacksmith* can never be at a Loss for *Forgeries*.

It is plain, Sir, that in talking of "the Ferment and Confusion of the fifteenth Century," you intend to cast a Slur upon the Reformation in *Scotland*, and so far you serve the *Popish* Cause; though you are out in your *Chronology*; for it was not 'till about the middle of the sixteenth Century that the Reformation took place there. And if there was any Ferment or Confusion at that Time, which was principally owing to the Opposition of the *Popish* Faction, and the cruel and perfidious Methods they made Use of, as this did not hinder the Church of *Scotland* from throwing off the Errors and Corruptions of *Papery*, so it did not hinder them from settling their Doctrine and Worship in that Manner which they judged most conformable to the first and purest Times of the *Christian* Church.

It appears from what has been offered, that the most primitive and scriptural Method of Address, when we approach the Supreme Being, is by what is commonly called *extempore* or free Prayer.

If it is duly considered this also will be found the most natural Way. All divine acceptable Prayer, it is allowed should take its Rise from the Heart, and should receive its first Formation there. But when Words are prescribed, the natural Order is inverted; the Affections are brought to the Words, instead of the Words flowing from the Affections. Something of this is experienced by Persons truly devout: They are often prostrate before God, pouring forth their Hearts with an overflowing and Indulgence

BLACKSMITH'S LETTER. 35

dulgence of Expression, which exceeds all the Ornaments of Oratory. These are not "rude and shocking Scenes, Blasphemous Petitions," as you, Sir, § are pleased overhastily to call them, when you tell us, that you have "often trembled" to see the ignorant proud Enthusiast approach "his Maker with as great Familiarity as he would his Neighbour, and kneel down with his Family to his extemporary Worship." There is no Doubt, but that the Ignorance and Weakness of some, may need the Assistance of set Forms; especially when they pray with others; and therefore such Helps are allowed and recommended to them. But after all, we must observe, that the Rules of Grammar and Oratory, are none of the essential Parts of Prayer. The Spirit of God may be sent forth to help the Infirmities of his Children, and to enable them to pray; it may soften the Heart, warm the Affections, and teach them to cry, *Abba Father!* But we do not say, that it will teach them the Beauties of Rhetorick, or an easy flowing Style; for as these are too mean to have any Stress laid upon them by wise or good Men, much less by the Almighty. *Out of the Mouths of Babes and Sucklings of weak and illiterate Christians, he can perfect his own Praise.*

God sees not as Man sees; he has not those Views of what entertains our Senses, nor those Affections and Desires towards them which we have. We may be delighted with the Elegancy of a Form; with Devotion pompous and magnificent; with curious Sculptures, nice Paintings, and the Melody of Sounds; but to think thus of Him, *who dwells not in Temples made with Hands*, is no less sensual, gross and irrational in us, than unworthy of Him who is an infinitely pure Spirit.

The Language in which he is addressed, may be broken and uncouth, but *such Pity as a Father*

sheweth unto his Children, such Pity sheweth the Lord to them that fear Him; And he that uttereth the Truth in his Heart, though his Words are not the most accurate, yet they are not the least acceptable. Even among Men, an affectionate tender Parent, will not despise the just and dutiful Requests of his Child, though the Words are but half pronounced. And if we that are Evil, know how to treat our Offspring in this Manner, who dare say what that Adversity is, which shall be rejected by the Almighty? But especially, who dare say, that the Prayer which proceeds from upright Intentions, and a broken sensible Heart, though it be but lamely uttered, shall not find Acceptance?

I allow that it is necessary and commendable in us to endeavour that our Wants and Desires should be expressed by suitable Words: Sometimes the most improved *Christians* may labour under a present Deadness of Spirit, and Indisposedness for any Exercise, that may require much Attention. In such disagreeable Circumstances, that they may aptly and pertinently express themselves, it is very necessary that the Matter as well as the Order of their Addresses, should for some Time before they engage in this Duty, be much thought upon. Then, he who hath made any tolerable Proficiency in Religion, who hath been conversant with the Holy Scriptures, and with divine Subjects; but especially who hath studied his own Heart, and its various Frames; will, through that Grace which is ever conferred upon him that asketh it, easily surmount all present Languor, and gain divine Enlargement in this Duty.

Others who have their Minds furnished very poorly with Ideas, or who through Difuse may have contracted an utter Inability for this Service, may perhaps find their Thoughts better expressed in precomposed Forms, and may receive considerable Benefits

BLACKSMITH's LETTER. 37

Benefits from them. * But far more improved *Christians* to confine themselves to such Forms, would be (to use the Words of the learned Bishop *Wilkins* †) “ as if a Man who had once need of
“ Crutches, should always afterwards make Use
“ of them, and so necessitate himself to a continual
“ Impotency.”

Those who cannot go without them may make Use of them; but a little Assiduity in the Exercise of Prayer, and some farther Acquaintance with God and their own Hearts, will, in Time, furnish even Weak *Christians*, both with Matter and Words, without such Assistances.

The Occurrences for Instance, of every Day, as the Mercies, Trials, Temptations, and Deliverances of it, will furnish Matter for Prayer. In the Morning, the View and Prospect of what is before us, or may befall us, will lead our Addresses; and in the Evening, if we have received signal Favours, or have escaped imminent Dangers, or have felt the Prevalency of Temptations, our Devotion will favour of these Things. In a Word, as our Hearts are usually formed according to our Occasions and Circumstances, these are so very variable, that our Prayers cannot be always the same, without being, to say no worse, less natural and pertinent.

When we are reduced to great Extremity, and know not where to fly for Relief, how natural is it to seek Shelter under the Shadow of the Divine Wings? When, with the Disciples, we are in Danger of Shipwreck; or, with *Paul*, for our Rebelliousness, to be *struck down to the Earth*; how apt are we to be instant and earnest in our Applicati-

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* That this is agreeable to the Sentiments of the Church of Scotland, may be seen if the Reader will give himself the Trouble of consulting the *Assemblies Directory*—page 9. Direct. 9 London Edition.

† *Wilkins's Gift of Prayer.*

ons for Mercy and Salvation? It cannot be said of the former, that their earnest Address, *help, Lord, else we perish*; or of the latter, whose first Petition was, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* I say, it cannot be affirmed, that these were the Result of Study or Premeditation; or that they were Parts of precomposed Collects: Yet the Prayer-hearing God did not reject these "*extempore* Effusions;" hereby inviting us always to consider his Providences, and to suit our Petitions accordingly.

But besides these extraordinary Occurrences, there may be other Cases, wherein it would be very improper that our Devotion should be fettered with Form. A well-prepared Mind, that hath a perfect Comprehension of its own State, as well as of what relates to the Church of God, or to the civil Community, of which he is a Member; and hath been long exercised, sometimes with much Enlargement and Success, in this Duty of Prayer, cannot be diverted from it, 'till he is authorized by Law and Form to begin it. Tho' all Men should be silent, he will take with him Words, and, as the Case requireth, supplicate the Supreme Over-ruler.

I cannot better express my Sentiments upon this Point, than in the Language of the excellent Prelate*, before referred to. "What one saith of
 " Counsel to be had from Books, *may be fitly ap-
 " plied,*" saith he, "to this Prayer by Book: That
 " it is commonly, of itself, something flat and
 " dead; floating, for the most Part, too much in
 " Generalities, and not particular enough for each
 " several Occasion. There is not that Life and
 " Vigour in it to engage the Affections, as when
 " it proceeds immediately from the Soul itself,
 " and is the natural Expression of those Particulars
 " whereof we are most sensible. And if it be a
 " Fault, not to strive and labour after this Gift,
 " much

* *Wilkins's Gift of Prayer*, p. 12.

“ much more is to *jeer* and *despise* it, by the Name
 “ of *extempore* Prayer, and *praying by the Spirit*;
 “ which Expressions, as they are frequently used
 “ by some Men, by way of Reproach, are, for
 “ the most Part, the Sign of a *profane Heart*, and
 “ such as are altogether Strangers from the Power
 “ and Comfort of this Duty.”

Here, Sir, by the Pen of an impartial Writer, you are plainly characterized: For the Agency of the Spirit, in this solemn Service, is what you are pleased, boldly, to ridicule *. “ In the Name of God,” you say, “ do you believe that you are inspired? And, again, “ have you so little Regard to the Honour of God, and the Interests of Religion, as to ascribe your extemporary Effusions to the Holy Spirit?” And, again, “ if the Matter of them be inspired, your Prayers are of equal Authority with the Scriptures themselves, and should be entered into the Canon.”

In answer to which, I shall observe, that the Defenders of free Prayer always distinguish between the Spirit and the Gift of Prayer. By the Spirit of Prayer, they understand those inward holy Desires and devout Affections which the Holy Spirit forms and excites in the Minds of good Men, and which are the Life and Soul of our external Services. By the Gift of Prayer, they understand, an Ability of chusing suitable Matter, and offering it up to God, in Expressions fit to represent our inward pious Desires on all Emergencies. The Gift may be the Effect of Pains, Application, and frequent Exercise in this Duty; and may be possessed by those who are destitute of the Spirit of Prayer. Where the Gift is wanting, which, in any *Christian*, is a very great Defect, Forms are allowable, and the Holy Spirit may be assisting, in such Cases, as well as where such Helps

are not used. But those who are blessed with the Gift, may have, also, the Assistances of the Spirit, exciting their devout Affections, enlightening their Minds to understand their spiritual Necessities, and directing them in the Matter of their Prayers, by bringing the Promises of God to their Remembrance; strengthening and elevating their natural Powers to a more vigorous Exercise, and helping them against their manifold Infirmities.

This much seemeth to be included in what the Scriptures declare concerning the Spirit's Agency in this Duty. Thus *Rom. viii. 26.*—*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our Infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh Intercession for us with Groanings which cannot be uttered.* “The Spirit of God,” saith Dr. *Whitby*, “is said to intercede for us, not as an Advocate or Mediator betwixt God and us, that being the Office of our Great High Priest; but as an *Exciter* or *Director* of us in our Addresses to God, to render them, for *Matter*, according to the Will of God; and, for *Manner*, fervent and effectual.” “*Christ* only,” saith the pious Bishop *Wilkins**, “in respect of his Merits and Sufferings, does make *Intercession* for us: But, because the Spirit of God does excite our Hearts to pray, and infuse in us holy Desires; stirring us up to, and instructing us in, our Duty; therefore he is said to intercede for us.”

This is all that, on this Head, is maintained by the reformed Churches, who plead for free Prayer.

You alledge, Sir †, that “the only Inspiration promised in Scripture, that is necessary, or that can be useful, is, that the Holy Spirit will inspire the Hearts of the Faithful with *Affections* proper for this important Duty; such as Shame and Sorrow in Confession, an humble Christian Hope of obtaining what we ask in our Petitions,

“Gratitude

* Gift of Prayer, p. 45.

† Blacksmith's Letter, p. 52.

BLACKSMITH'S LETTER. 41

“ Gratitude and Love in our Thanksgivings, and
 “ such other Affections as are suitable to the several
 “ Parts of Prayer.” And I would only observe
 upon it, that he who is blessed with a Frame for
 praying, and whose Affections are, in this Man-
 ner, enlivened and quickened, will not want a
 Form. Upon this Account (as a *Spirit of Grace*
and Supplication) the Holy Ghost is promised to
 the Church.

So *Gal. iv. 6.*—*Because ye are Sons, God hath sent*
forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts, crying Ab-
ba, Father. And *Eph. v. 18.*—*Be filled with the*
Spirit, speaking to yourselves in Psalms and Hymns, and
spiritual Songs, singing and making Melody in your
Hearts to the Lord; giving Thanks always for all
Things unto God and the Father, in the Name of our
Lord Jesus Christ. And *Chap. vi. 18.*—*Praying*
always, with all Prayer and Supplication, in the Spirit,
and watching thereunto with all Perseverance, and Sup-
plication for all Saints. So the Apostle Jude, in his
 general Epistle, at the 20th Verse. *But ye, beloved,*
building up yourselves in your most holy Faith, Praying
in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the Love of God,
looking for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eter-
nal Life.

I am well aware that some interpret these Texts
 so as to leave the present Church little or no Inter-
 est in them; placing all that is here promised
 among the *χαρισματα*, or extraordinary Gifts of
 the spirit, conferred on the first *Christians*, and
 that they were not to extend beyond the Age of
 Inspiration. But such Interpreters have, and will
 have, the Misfortune of the happy Experience of
Christians in every Age against them. I confess
 (saith a late ingenious Author) * “ that the Holy
 “ Spirit hath been, in a great Measure, so long
 “ departed from his Churches, that we are tempt-
 “ ed to think all his promised Operations, pecu-
 “ liar

* *Dr. Watts.* See his *Guide to Prayer*, p. 175.

“ liar to the first Ages of *Christianity*; and it was
 “ from this Absence of the Spirit, that Men pro-
 “ ceeded to invent various Methods to supply the
 “ want of him in Prayer; as by *Pater Nosters*,
 “ Beads, Litanies, and other Forms, some good,
 “ some bad; to which, that they might keep up
 “ a Form of Worship, and the Attention of the
 “ People, the Churches were confined.”

I would not be thought to insinuate that the Divine Spirit doth never afford his Assistance in the Use of Forms; I am only accounting for that Disrespect which Men are apt to shew at the Doctrine of the Assistances of the Spirit; and what I would be understood to mean is, that the Promises of the Gospel, with respect to these Assistances, may be hoped for and experienced by all true *Christians* to the End of the World.

And here, let it be further observed, that among all the extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit * prophesied by *Joel*, Prayer is not mentioned; the Words are, *I will pour out my Spirit upon all Flesh, and your Sons and Daughters shall prophesy, your old Men shall dream Dreams, your young Men shall see Visions; and also upon the Servants, and upon the Handmaids, in those Days will I pour out my Spirit; &c.* And in the second Chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles*, where this Prophecy is recited, as having its Accomplishment, Prayer is not mentioned as any of those extraordinary or miraculous Powers which were then shed forth by the Influences of the Spirit. Neither is it so mentioned in any Part of the *New Testament*, except in one Place †, where the Gift of Tongues, in that they were able to express themselves in Languages they had never learned, seems to be referred to, rather than the Gift of Prayer. If, then, it is not to be found among the extraordinary or miraculous, it must belong to the ordinary

* *Joel* ii. 28.

† See St. *Paul's* Enumeration, 1 Cor. xii.

BLACKSMITH'S LETTER. 43

nary or more common Influences or Operations of the Spirit ; which were to extend to all the Periods of the Church, and to all the Individuals which compose *Christ's* mystical Body to the End of the World.

By these sacred Powers which are communicated to all sincere *Christians*, though there is nothing *new* revealed to them, or what might amount to Inspiration ; yet the Truths, the Laws, and Rules which were formerly revealed, are brought to their Remembrance. And to this Purpose are several of the Promises relating to this Blessed *Paraclete*, which we read of in the *New Testament*.

If, then, the Continuance of the ordinary Operations of the Spirit is a Thing promised to, and to be expected by, the Body of believing *Christians*, to the End of Time ; the Ridicule of Inspiration must be, at least, senseless and stupid ; perhaps it may be, in some Degree, impious.

Having thus collected and faithfully represented what the Abettors of free Prayer maintain, respecting the Holy Spirit and its Influences, I shall now proceed to obviate such other Complaints as you have offered against this Manner of Worship.

" In our Congregations, you say*, the Mouth
 " runs before the Mind, and speaks without giving
 " us any Opportunity of thinking what we
 " ought to speak, and often says Things that we
 " should certainly reject, and sometimes offers Petitions
 " that we should absolutely abhor, had we
 " Time calmly to examine them: Our Mouth
 " leads us into the gross Blunder of presenting our
 " Addresses to the Deity first, and next judging
 " whether they be proper Addresses, after they
 " are offered, when we cannot mend what is
 " wrong, or alter what is improper." You even
 make it a Question †, " whether the Laity can
 " join

* Blacksmith's Letter, p. 23.

† Ibid. p. 32 and 55.

“ join at all in our publick Prayers; for we must
“ either suppose that they go along with the Mini-
“ ster, offering every Word as he utters it, or wait
“ until he has finished the Sentence, and then ex-
“ amine it, and give their Assent.”

To call this cavilling, rather than reasoning, is not improper. If a Minister hath been regularly and duly called and appointed to his Office, it is not doubted, except with the atheistical Herd, that he has a Right, among other of his sacred Ministrations, to offer up Prayers and Supplications with Thanksgivings, in Behalf of those among whom he officiates. If this is the Case, then, that which is the most natural and scriptural Manner of Address, hath been already shewed.

To say, that in this Kind of publick Worship, “ the Mouth runs before the Mind, and offers “ Petitions, which should be rejected,” is, at the best, but a Reflection, both on the Laity and Clergy, equally impolite and unjust. To the Laity, it denies that Privilege in the Worship of God, which is allowed them in all other Affairs, relative to reasonable Beings. In our mutual Conversation and Commerce, we find very few, except among those who are void of Understanding, but know perfectly well where to yield their Assent or Dissent. Even the most untutored Ear can distinguish between Harmony and Discord; and it needs no Proof, that the Action of the Mind is equally quick, whatever it be that demands its Attention.

How would it hamper all Conversation, and how should we be straitned in the common Offices of Life, if we must first critically examine and nicely weigh every Sentence that is spoken to us, before we could give a suitable Answer? And how altogether vain and impertinent would all the Labour of the Pulpit, or Senate, or Bar be, upon this Supposition? If you do not understand what is spoken to you, it is indeed to no Purpose to address

dress you: And this distinguishing Prerogative of Speech, whereby Man is capable of communicating his Thoughts, for the Improvement or Entertainment of his Fellow Creatures, is no more than an empty Name. Nay it is worse, if we admit your Manner of reasoning, Sir, for it would tend more to perplex and to confound, than to enlighten and improve.

To say, that I cannot join in publick Service, or in offering up my Prayers, with the Speaker to the Almighty, because I must either in doing so, go along with him in every Word that he utters, or wait till he hath finished, and then give my Assent to the Whole; is reasoning much of the same Strength, with that of the Philosopher, who ridiculously argued against Motion, nearly in the same Style—For, says he, “if I move, it must be either
“in the Place where I am, or where I am not, but
“no Body can move in the Place where it is; for
“if it is there, it does not come out of it; nor in
“the Place where it is not, for where it is not, it
“cannot act.” A certain *Cynic*, gravely answered, by turning upon his Heel, and walking to and fro through the Apartment. The Evidence of common Sense, Sir, is against your Argument.

Should a Minister be told by one of his Parishioners, “Sir, it is to no Purpose for me to attend
“your publick Ministrations; I am in no Capacity to improve by them; you speak, it is true,
“and it may be rationally enough; but if I am to
“receive Benefit by your Discourses, my Mind
“must either go along with every Word; or I must
“examine every Sentence after it is spoken. The
“first would be acting too implicitly; the latter
“is not in my Power; for before I have one Sentence half examined, you have well nigh finished another, and the Mind of Man is not able to
“attend so many Things at once.”——Would this Reasoning be admitted? and can the Preacher plead

plead to be heard, and insist upon it that he may be understood when delivering a Message from God to Men, and not when offering up Prayers for Men to God? Or shall the Laity be treated as reasonable Beings in the one Case, and divested of all Exercise of Reason and Judgment, in the other? This must be looked upon, by the unprejudiced, as very unfair.

It may not be improper to observe further, upon this Argument, that *St. Paul*, in reasoning against Prayers in an unknown Tongue, [*1 Cor. xiv.*] goes upon this Supposition, that when a Man prays in a known Tongue, in the publick Assembly, it may be to the Edification of the Hearers. But according to your Way of arguing, Sir, it would be to no Purpose for him to pray in publick at all though in a known Tongue, if it were not in a stated prescribed Form, since People could not be edified, or receive any Benefit from it. And yet I believe the greatest Admirer of precomposed prescribed Forms, will scarce take upon him to affirm, that the Prayers, the Apostle there speaks of, were of that kind.

As for Reflections upon those who offer up our Prayers, that their Performances are “ corrupted
“ by the contrary Petitions of contending Parties;
“ mixed with the whimsical Opinions and pernicious Principles of Libertines and Enthusiasts;
“ rendered obscure and contemptible by the Pedantry and affected Learning of the younger,
“ or by the Weaknesses of the Mind and Body of the older, Ministers; interlaid with ill-timed
“ Compliments to the Great, with Politicks and
“ private Piques and Quarrels, &c.”

I will venture to affirm, Sir, that those who attend constantly upon publick Worship, either in *Scotland*, or among Protestant *Dissenters* elsewhere, know that the Accusation advanced by you, as if the

BLACKSMITH'S LETTER. 47

the Abuses you mention were very frequent and even general, is absolutely false. And I am sorry to say it, you have shewn too little Regard to Truth or Decency to be believed upon your own Word. But I suppose you have been conversant in such Authors as the *Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence*, whose Calumnies and Misrepresentations have been long since detected and exposed. There are thousands of Witnesses that the Prayers offered up in the publick Assemblies are generally such as all *Christians* may join in, scriptural, grave, and decent. But there is this remarkable Difference between those confined to Liturgies, and those that are not so, that if any Thing be wrong in a free unprescribed Prayer, it is easily amended, and the Mischief cannot go very far or be long continued; but in a publick prescribed Liturgy, if either improper Expressions, or false Doctrines, or superstitious and idolatrous Ways of Worship be introduced, they are bound down both upon Ministers and People, and continue perhaps, to future Ages.

* We need go no further for Instances of this, than

* I think it proper to give the Reader the following Quotation from Dr. *Bright*, Dean of St. *Asaph*, his Treatise on Prayer. Having spoken of publick Forms, he immediately adds, that "sometimes they may be composed and constituted in an ignorant, hypocritical, prophane, cunningly tyrannical or sensual Age." And then he observes "that there are many Prayers constituted or allowed of, by that no less boasting than corrupt Church of *Rome*, which in respect of their falsehood or uncertainty, their trivialness or uselessness, their Impertinency, Disorder, and Confusion, a Man of ordinary Examination and Understanding would disdain to use himself, or appoint for the Use of the meanest and most ignorant, and I think, says he, I could instance in some, as comtemptible as any Fanatical Mechanick among us hath blundered out extempore."—He had before observed, as is worthy of our particular Notice, that "whatever Defects are in them, Publick Forms, not only of Prayers, but of all other Things, will have these Defects longer continued than extempore ones." Dr. *Bright's* Treatise of Prayer, p. 67, 68. Lond. Ed. 1678.

than the *Romish* Church. Her *Missals* and *Breviaries*, and other Forms of Devotion, have been mainly instrumental in propagating and establishing her false Doctrines, Transubstantiation, Purgatory, &c: And her idolatrous and superstitious Worship, such as that which is paid to Saints and Angels, to Images, and to the Cross. And all the Inconveniencies that have ever arisen from the Abuse of what you call *extempore* Effusions, have not done the thousandth Part of the Mischief in the *Christian* Church, that these prescribed *Liturgies* have done. And as to Improperities of Expression, if you, Mr. *Blacksmith*, were as well acquainted with this Controversy, as I presume you would be thought to be, you would know that several Improperities have been observed even in that publick Liturgy, which probably you most admire. But I spare the mention of them; for they that so freely censure others, have often very tender Ears when it comes to their own Case.

It is almost unnecessary further to add that there are various Gifts and Men of different Parts, in all *Christian* Communities; but it would be very cruel to load the Shoulders of the innocent, with the Faults or Failings of the Guilty. Should this unrighteous Manner of censuring and condemning *All*, for the Weaknesses of a *Few*, take Place, what Church upon Earth could stand acquitted?

Petitions unseasonable or improper may by some be offered up; but it gives all the real Friends of true *Christian* Liberty no small Consolation, that they are neither necessitated by any prescribed Form to address themselves with Impropiety, nor to prefer Petitions quite contrary to the real Sentiments of their Hearts. They are neither hindered from what they should say, nor obliged, by the Use of a defective Form, to speak what they should not say.

You

BLACKSMITH'S LETTER. 49

You alledge, Sir, that “ all Dangers might be prevented and all Deficiencies supplied by composing and establishing a pious Form of Prayer.”—But if it be true, what hath been proved, that unconstrained free Prayer, is the most natural, primitive and scriptural Manner of Address to our Maker; then to pray by Form, to avoid Improprieties, is the greatest Blunder we could commit.

Besides, an unexceptionable Form of human Composure, hath never yet appeared in the *Christian Church*; and if any such Thing should appear, it would be no Security against Blunders. In our Neighbour Church, though many of their Prayers are the best that are extant in any publick established Liturgy, yet there are some of them not without their Faults. * And in the reading of the very best, considerable Mistakes have happened, and may every Day happen, owing to Inattention, or some worse Cause. I could give undoubted Instances to this Purpose, if I chose to imitate, Sir, your *genteel* Manner of Writing.

But what is still more considerable, the composing, establishing and imposing a Form of Prayer, though more unexceptionable than hath hitherto appeared, would yet be an unjustifiable Infringe-

* Bishop *Stillingfleet*, mentioning several Things in the Book of Common Prayer, excepted against by the *Dissenters*, candidly acknowledges, that if they were *reviewed, explained or amended*, it would be so far from being a *Dis honour* to that Church, *that it might add to the Glory of it.*

Stillingfleet's Preface to the unreasonableness of Separation.

See also—*Candid Disquisitions*, where many Things are laid before the Governors of the Church which well deserve their serious Consideration; though the learned and candid Authors, some of whom are said to be of eminent Note in the Church of *England*, instead of being attended to, have met with Opposition and Reproach—And this is one Instance among many that might be brought, to shew how difficult it is, when once a publick Liturgy is established by Authority, to get any Alterations made in it, however requisite, and only intended to render it more perfect and unexceptionable.

ment on the Liberty of *Christians*. There is not one Text in all the Bible which impowers any Man, or Set of Men, to prescribe to me the very Words which at all Times and in all Circumstances, I am to offer up to God. The Apostles, though under the Conduct of the Divine Spirit, never attempted such a Thing, as hath been already proved. They offered up their Addresses, suitable to their own Conceptions. And since they have not prescribed to the Church, in this Instance, for uninspired Men to do it, must, I think, border upon Presumption.

If therefore, there neither is, nor can in Truth be, any such Thing as a perfect invariable Form of human Composure; if such a Form, could it be devised, would not prevent Mistakes; but above all, if the imposing it, would be inconsistent with the Rights of *Christians*; there is no Reason why it should be complied with: And the Remedy you propose, Sir, would be of more dangerous Consequence than the Evil complained of.

If it is alledged that, in the natural Order of Things, the Congregation should first be satisfied, that the Prayers to be offered in their Name are proper and just, and such as they can with Freedom join in; otherwise they cannot pray in Faith. —I answer, that we are required to hear, as well as to pray *in Faith*; but according to this Way of Reasoning, before a Sermon is delivered, it should always undergo the previous Examination of those that are to hear it, otherwise it cannot be profitable. If it be said, that this is carrying the Matter too far; I answer, that the Understandings of Men are employed, and their rational Assent required, no more in the one Case than in the other.

In support of your Argument you say *, that
 “ should the ablest Member of the House of Com-
 “ mons propose to offer an Address to his Majesty,
 “ in

* Blacksmith's Letter, page 23.

BLACKSMITH's LETTER. 51

" in the Name of the House, without communi-
 " cating it to the Members, the Impropriety
 " would be immediately perceived." I answer,
 that if a Member of any Community be properly
 authorized to officiate for that Community, either
 in Matters civil or sacred, there is no Impropriety
 in his executing, to the best of his Ability, his
 Commission.

But I shall put the Case a little stronger, and
 more to the Purpose: Supposing a set of Men,
 whose Skill in Politicks was very deep, should
 (without any Authority from the Sovereign for so
 doing) take upon them to draw up a Form or
 Forms of Address, which should always be pre-
 sented to Him in the same Words, let the Nature
 of Government, or the Exigencies of Corporations
 and Kingdoms vary as they please; would not the
 Impropriety then be very striking? Would not
 the Imposition be very glaring? The meanest in-
 corporated Society, I dare say, would not willing-
 ly be fettered with this political Yoke; especially
 if the constituent Laws of the Kingdom did not
 warrant such Prescriptions, but rather provided
 for the Contrary.

You allow, Sir †, that in extraordinary Cases,
 as in *War, Famine or Pestilence*, you might have
 added in Peace, Health, and Plenty, *proper Forms*
may be provided. And we see that in the Church
 where Forms are authorized, they are in such Cases
 provided. Now, Sir, I beseech you, be a righte-
 ous Judge in this Matter: What do the People in
 general who upon publick Fast or Thanksgiving
 Days, offer up their Prayers or Praises by Form,
 know before hand of what shall be prescribed them?
 Some few perhaps in the *Metropolis* where they
 are published, may have examined and considered
 before they joined in them; but in Country Places
 very few, but the Ministers of Parishes, know any

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* Ibid. p. 60.

Thing of them, 'till they hear them when they are offered. Yet would it not be very uncharitable to say, that those who are not previously acquainted with them, or who have not maturely examined them, cannot with Propriety join in such Addresses?

In Scripture we have frequent Instances of publick Prayer; but that the People were unacquainted with them, was not, neither can it be, a Prejudice to true Devotion. I must beg Leave once more to refer to the Opinion of the worthy Prelate* before mentioned, upon this Head; "where-
 " as 'tis commonly objected by some, that they
 " cannot so well join in an unknown Form (*so he*
 " *calls free Prayer in respect of those that hear it*)
 " with which they are not beforehand acquainted;
 " I answer, that's an inconsiderable Objection,
 " and does oppose all Kind of Forms that are not
 " publickly prescribed. As a Man may in his
 " Judgment assent unto any divine Truth deliver-
 " ed in a Sermon which he never heard before, so
 " may he join in his Affections to a Holy Desire
 " in a Prayer he never heard before. If he, who
 " is the Mouth of the Rest, deliver through Im-
 " prudence, what we cannot approve of, God
 " does not look upon it as our Prayer, if our De-
 " fires do not say AMEN to it."—The Sense of
 this Good Man thus expressed, if seriously con-
 sidered, Sir, will appear a sufficient Answer to
 many of your Cavils.

I shall observe further, that the Matter of Prayer is so very plain, as not to stand in need of that nice, minute Enquiry which you speak of. The humble *Christian* who has made it the Business and Delight of his Soul to attend publick Worship, is not unacquainted with the proper Order and Method, as well as with the Matter of Prayer. He knoweth, for Instance, his Sins, Wants, and Mer-
 cies,

* *Wilkins's Gift of Prayer*, p. 12.

BLACKSMITH'S LETTER. 53

cies, as soon as they are named ; and though these Things are put into Words that he has not been accustomed to hear, yet this does not require any Time to deliberate whether the Confessions, Petitions, or Thanksgivings suited to the common Infirmities, Desires, and Enjoyments of all, are proper to be offered up to the Almighty ; he heartily joins in them, and reaps the Benefit.

But his Comfort and Benefit are doubled, if he is so happy as to hear his own particular Case laid before the Almighty, which, perhaps, he had in Confidence unfolded to his Minister earnestly requesting his Prayers and those of the Church upon it ; or which he, whose Business it is to watch over the Flock, had by some other Means attained to the Knowledge of. A Privilege and Pleasure this, from which, by stated Forms, he must have been for ever excluded.

Your Argument is still further urged by alledging*, that “ if Forms are unlawful we are unlawfully baptized, for that is done by a Form.— “ We administer the Lord’s Supper in an unlawful Manner, for we do it by a Form, I mean the “ Words of the first Institution : We are dismissed “ every Lord’s Day with an unlawful Blessing ; for “ one of the Solemn Forms with which the Apostles conclude their Epistles is always used upon “ that Occasion. Further, if Forms of Prayer be “ not acceptable to God, and an useful way of “ Worship for ourselves, we grossly offend every “ Time that we meet in Church ; for it is impossible to sing eighteen or twenty Lines of a Psalm, “ but we offer some important petition by a Form.”

I answer, that for all these Matters we have divine Authority and Example. And no Conclusion can be drawn from those Parts of our solemn public Services, thus warranted, to enforce Forms which

* Blacksmith’s Letter, p. 62, 63.

which are destitute of such Warrant or Authority. Otherwise all the *Ave Marias*, Beads, and Trumpery of the Church of *Rome*, may plead for Admission upon the same Footing, and with equal shew of Reason.

You alledge further*, that “ if our Laiety pray
 “ in the same Words of the Minister, they are as
 “ much confined to a Form as any other People;
 “ for if the Minister says, *Most gracious God, for-*
 “ *give us our Sins, preserve us from Danger, and pro-*
 “ *vide for our Necessities* : if the People repeat these
 “ Words, either in their Minds or with their
 “ Mouths, or both, it is evident that they pray
 “ as much by a Form, as if the Prayer had been
 “ composed a thousand years ago.”—But, Sir,
 can that be a Form to any, which is not so in itself,
 nor to him that pronounces it? Let any Man of
 common Sense ask himself, what is meant by a
 Form? Whether it does not include in it the con-
 stant Use of the same Method, Manner and Words;
 and then this Quibble of your’s, will appear very
 vain and frivolous.

If it be found that any Minister, as far as your
 Censure reaches, satisfies himself with a Form,
 let it be remembered that this Form is not im-
 posed upon other Churches; and even, among
 those where it is used, it is subject to the same
 Disgust which those human Composures give, that
 are over and over repeated. This would not be
 endured at the Theatre, or at the Bar; and we
 have as good a Right to look for Variety, and to
 expect to meet with Men of Parts, among those
 that are of sacred Character. For my own Part, I
 shall honestly declare it as my private Opinion,
 that such as are incapable of using free Prayer,
 without apparent hazard of rendering it contempt-
 ible

BLACKSMITH's LETTER. 55

tible by their indecent Manner of performing it, should not be admitted to the Ministry.

Thus, Sir, in the Spirit of the Gospel, it will appear, I hope, that all your Objections against the Modes of *Presbyterian* Church Worship as far as they but seemed to have the Face of Reason, are fully answered.—And therefore, after assuring you, that this Labour was undertaken from no sinister or unchristian Motives, but purely with an Intention to justify Practices which are agreeable to Scripture and the best Antiquity, and to preserve the Ignorant or Careless, from the pernicious Effects of groundless Prejudices, I shall bid you (as is not unusual with those who have been combating each other) a friendly Adieu.

THE END.



1 JA 64

